

## Meeting Minutes

### **OLIVER RANCH CORE GROUP University of Nevada, Las Vegas Richard Tam Alumni Center Tuesday, May 17, 2005**

The meeting commenced at 10:30 a.m. with the following persons in attendance: Kathy August, Blaine Benedict, Dale Etheridge, Christy Falba, Nancy Flagg, Pat Fleming, David Frommer, Laurie Howard, Megan Iudice, Michael Johnson, Jeanne Klockow, Richard Leifried, Mark Morse, Helen Mortenson, Jackson Ramsey, Peg Rees, Michael Reiland, Mark Rekshynskyj, Frank Tepper, Henry Tom, Les Wallach, Debbie Wright, Pat Williams, Billie Young.

#### **1. Introductions**

The group welcomed Frank Tepper, local citizen, and Mark Rekshynskyj, general manager of the Red Rock Conservation Area. Mark is assuming Tim O'Brien's management role on the RRDLC project.

#### **2. Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the March 15, 2005, meeting were approved as presented.

#### **3. Review of Project Issues & Concerns**

Michael Reiland reviewed concerns brought up over the past couple years and the resolution of those issues. Nancy Flagg prepared a list of concerns taken from all historical minutes, which were distributed to the group (*on file with UNLV Public Lands Institute and BLM office*). He asked everyone to review the list and to email him or Nancy if there are any remaining concerns that should be added. Michael will create a matrix to show the status of each issue and will post it on the RRDLC website prior to the next Core Group meeting.

In terms of a strategic program review, Michael reminded the group that a value analysis of the schematic drawings was completed in January. Line and Space has been redoing some areas based on those suggestions. Peg Rees asked who participated in the value analysis. Pat Fleming said approximately half were BLM employees from the region (Utah, Denver, etc.) plus a facilitator from a Minneapolis consulting firm and a person from the National Renewable Energy Laboratory. Peg clarified that the value analysis reviewed the architects' work from a facilities viewpoint rather than a user viewpoint. Michael said Line and Space attended the sessions and responded to programming issues, but he would like to do the same sort of review from an operations viewpoint with experts from operational areas. Michael didn't believe an operations review would affect the architectural timeline, but Peg asked what Plan B would be if the reviewers say the design doesn't meet the operation plan. Michael thought the plan could be tweaked along the way.

Peg indicated that a critical path for decisions should be indicated for the project so that architects don't do unnecessary work. The critical path would be sequential, with a tight window for meetings, comments, and operational change by certain date, architecture changes by a certain date, etc. Blaine Benedict agreed that time is critical. A strategic review is important and should be done in a timely manner. The Fund-raising and Partnership Committee is concerned about the project being a success.

Michael said he has a timeline for people to look at. He also is looking to validate the curriculum, which can be tied into the overall project timeline. Peg asked if there is any information on what has been addressed. Michael said Building Committee minutes are provided at each Core Group meeting. Peg asked if the value analysis was distributed. The report is posted on the website, although it is not currently accessible to the public. Michael offered to email the document to the Core Group. Decisions about the value analysis were made at a Building Committee meeting and those minutes were distributed at the March core group meeting. Nancy Flagg pointed out that the Building Committee minutes aren't specifically reviewed at the Core Group, so it leads participants to feel like they don't know what is happening.

Helen Mortenson said the Core Group is left out of the loop and BLM makes decisions. The agency needs input and dialogue from the Core Group. She complained that a number of areas have not been discussed, such as sewage facilities and trails. Michael said trails cannot be discussed because of sensitive cultural areas on the site. Helen reiterated that the Core Group is not knowledgeable about the information available to BLM and is merely asked to okay the agency's decisions after the fact. She said the agency is not being open about the process but is asking the public to support it. Michael insisted that the agency has released the information it can but has withheld what they cannot legally release. He stated that Juan Palma and Angie Lara are committed to public input.

Helen argued that a complete survey of the 300+ acres has not been completed. Michael said a cultural survey has been completed by Otak, reviewed by BLM, and sent to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). A treatment plan is currently being developed, after which information can be released to Line and Space to determine trails on the property. Helen said she believes the cultural report is incomplete and will be challenged. Michael reiterated that the Core Group can provide him comments at any time. Peg Rees noted that was true, but said today's conversation indicates dissatisfaction with a non-inclusive communication process. Information may be available but is not provided to the group in a manner that is understandable. The Core Group wants to be a public committee that can support the project. She would like the project manager to rethink the inclusiveness of how the project is handled. The perception is that it is closed process by a small group of people.

David Frommer suggested information be provided on the leading edge rather than the trailing edge. Currently, decisions are made and then communicated to the group, rather than issues being identified, discussed in Core Group, with the information and feedback then provided to the Building Committee prior to decisions being made. Billie Young said communication can always be improved. She suggested providing a chart of where people can get more involved through subcommittees and the like.

Michael said the system is not perfect but he will do his best to open up lines of communication. The list of issues distributed today reflects things discussed in Core Group, but the resolution of those issues hasn't been communicated well. Not everyone will always be pleased by a decision, but people want to know when a decision was made and why.

Frank Tepper suggested having someone from Nevada Power, Southwest Gas, and Desert Research Institute attend Core Group meetings. Michael noted that BLM cannot mandate a particular representative to attend. The Core Group is not an official decision-making body. Helen said she thought the Core Group was to serve as partners with BLM to make recommendations and decisions.

Jackson Ramsey noted the Building Committee minutes don't tell him anything. For example, the Core Group has never gotten the final word on water availability even though this issue has come up for years. Nancy agreed and said the hydrology report distributed at the last meeting was not understandable to the layperson. Bob Boyd's verbal report at that meeting was impossible to compare with the written report. It would have been helpful for BLM to have attached a written summary to the hydrology report that explained its findings. Helen agreed.

Richard Leifried asked what was holding up the selection of an operator. He expressed concern that the funding for the project could be taken away if progress isn't shown. He felt the work done so far has been very good but believes a site manager is needed.

Billie clarified that funding has already been set aside for current SNPLMA projects, so nothing should be at risk from President Bush's initiative to reserve future land-auction income. Michael said technically the Secretary of the Interior can stop any funding for a project that hasn't yet happened, but he reiterated that the president is proposing to take future funding only.

Mark Rekshynskyj asked to table the communication issue. He said if anyone on the Core Group has issues with communication, they can phone BLM and get any information they want.

#### 4. Update on Water Options & NEPA

Michael Reiland said a year ago the BLM thought it had ground water rights on the Oliver Ranch property but later found they had surface water rights only. The agency has looked at buying rights and transferring them but found that water rights can't be transferred into the conservation area. The next option was to recharge the surface water into the ground; thus far, that appears not to be possible because of a state administrative rule. The agency is now looking for an exception to the administrative rule or, alternatively, to use the existing surface water rights by holding the water in tanks for future use. At present, the agency is looking at historical data on spring flows in good and bad years and what size tank would be needed. Peg Rees said she doesn't know if Clark County will allow water use from a tank as the primary source; her understanding is this isn't allowed for residential use but must be from a well or tied into water lines.

Helen Mortenson asked which spring source the BLM is investigating. Michael said it will probably be Whispering Bend Spring, but they will look at other sources as well. Helen noted that there was no surface water flow last year.

Peg asked what Plan B is for the water. Michael said the worst case scenario is to build a pipeline from the municipal supply. The discussion turned to whether a cost estimate for this option had been determined. BLM has been in discussions with the Southern Nevada Water Authority but has not yet gotten a specific estimate on getting water to the visitor center and campgrounds, which could then be extended to Oliver Ranch. Michael said the only downside to this option would be if there were a NEPA issue.

Peg suggested having the Core Group look at the options, discuss them, and give BLM a recommendation. She noted in 4 years the agency has yet to get a cost estimate that would direct decisions about water. Michael said the agency has been trying to get those numbers but the Water District tends not to want to give estimates until you know what you want to do. Peg asked if there has been a written request to the Water District. Michael said meetings have been held but there is nothing in writing.

Les Wallach reminded the group that plans call for usage of 10 acre feet of water for the facility overall – 1 acre foot for the Wild Horse and Burro facility and 9 for the school. The projected

usage was set after many meetings. The goal is 50 gallons per day per capita. Les said that 1 year ago the BLM thought it had access to 19 acre feet but wanted to reduce that need by half. It was only recently that the agency discovered its water rights were not what they thought.

Les noted the spring is currently running 3 acre feet per day. Helen said that was an anomaly and can't be stored for the lean years. She expressed concern that the usage goal was not realistic for a facility with a commercial kitchen, staff housing, children, and horses.

Blaine Benedict agreed these are the issues people are concerned about. Options aren't discussed in a timely manner and no resolution is apparent. The Core Group could be effective advocates with the governor on getting an exception to the state administrative rule. But the committee has received no written document with options and how people could help. Kathy August pointed out there are certain things BLM cannot request people to do on its behalf.

Michael said Core Group meetings should be an exchange of issues. People can reach him 24 hours a day. The BLM wants the project to be a success. Mark Rekshynskyj said the BLM can list out issues but can't tell the group what to do about them. He said the BLM is officially notifying the Core Group that there is a problem with water and is examining various options. Peg noted the Core Group doesn't have sufficient information in writing on the options BLM is pursuing, along with the pros and cons of each option. She said the project can't continue to live in an oral history tradition. Michael said he can't do a written report on everything but brings issues to the meeting.

Helen reminded the group that water was the primary issue at the first NEPA Committee meeting. The committee contended that 19 acre feet wasn't available but the BLM chose to ignore the concern. She warned that the cultural report may also be flawed. Mark asked if she had put her concerns in writing. He said he and Michael would put together a list of issues, but he encouraged Core Group members to be specific on the information they want and to request the information in writing. He welcomed emails if anyone has further concerns.

##### 5. Core Curriculum Progress Report

Jeanne Klockow provided an update on the development of the RRDLC core curriculum. She has been working with appropriate stakeholders on the wild horse and burro curriculum per the timeline she distributed at the last meeting. The wild horse curriculum is closely aligned with the overall RRDLC curriculum in that it poses essential questions to students and they use the facility to discover answers. She distributed a list of the 5 essential questions that have been proposed (*on file in UNLV Public Lands Institute and BLM office*). As the curriculum is further developed, it will be brought back to the Core Group. Jeanne asked for feedback on the essential questions. Peg Rees asked if there was discussion about tying in science – such as looking at the evolution of horses on this continent through time. Jeanne said it was discussed and will be included. Michael Reiland said they have to be careful not to get into questions that become politicized. Peg said the science can be examined through DNA, which is not political. Helen Mortenson agreed and noted that a Pleistocene horse had been discovered at Tule Springs with ligaments from which DNA can be drawn. Peg said this would demonstrate a beautiful linkage between 2 BLM sites. Billie Young liked the idea but reiterated that BLM is sensitive to staying away from policy and sticking to facts.

Jeanne informed the group that she is also making progress on developing correlations between the RRDLC curriculum and BLM's mission. She has been meeting with Kathy August, and once their preliminary work has been approved by Angie Lara it will be brought to the Core Group.

The next curricular strand to be developed is Historical/Cultural. Jeanne asked for help identifying stakeholders and invited anyone on the Core Group to participate. The first step will be to brainstorm the essential questions and then correlate them to state and national standards.

#### 6. Community Outreach

Nancy Flagg provided an update on plans for community outreach activities. The university has discussed with BLM the difficulties of proceeding with some outreach activities because of key unresolved issues, most notably water and NEPA. However, planning for selected activities can proceed while these issues are addressed. A final plan on outreach activities has not yet been approved by BLM. In the interim, Nancy asked the Core Group to review the key messages from the draft outreach plan (*on file in UNLV Public Lands Institute and BLM office*). These were initially discussed at the last meeting but have been refined with BLM input into shorter, more succinct phrases. The group provided additional changes that Nancy will incorporate into the plan.

Nancy also distributed a draft list of environmental groups and news media (*on file with UNLV and BLM*). and asked for feedback on any missing elements. Pat Williams said she would provide the media list used by Friends of Red Rock Canyon.

Finally, Nancy asked participants to review the Core Group roster. As outreach activities move forward, it becomes increasingly important to ensure that appropriate stakeholders receive information about the project. Several additions and changes to the list were provided.

Peg Rees suggested holding another open meeting to reach out to and update the people who participated in the programming sessions last April. Michael was open to the idea but thought it needed more discussion as to the best time and place. He suggested a Saturday afternoon.

#### 7. Standing Reports

##### A. Line and Space Architects

Henry Tom and Les Wallach of Line and Space Architects provided an update on recent activities (*on file in UNLV Public Lands Institute office and BLM office*). The architects have started doing preliminary engineering. They looked at the Value Analysis suggestions and the Building Committee decisions. The project is 25% over budget to do everything originally desired. In order to bring the project back into budget, several cuts have been made. The shade canopies at the bus drop-off were eliminated because of the proximity to the friendship circle. Les Wallach said a lot of shade will be provided by the vertical walls. The architects are adding numbers on the walls to assist bus drivers.

Bathrooms were removed from the friendship circle since it is so close to the dining hall. The cantilevered roof structure at the friendship circle has been eliminated and replaced with post-and-beam construction. The cover has been broadened to approximately 2000 square feet. A space has been added for a gas-operated flame to come out of the rocks as a way of incorporating a campfire experience. Helen asked if the roof served any other purpose, such as a solar collector. Les said it is just a shade structure.

Frank Tepper asked if winds were considered with respect to the roof. Les said this is always a primary concern of architects. Frank asked about the durability of the roof. Les said it has steel beams within it. Frank asked why no solar panels are on top of it. Les said a decision was made to keep the solar collectors in one spot at the Wild Horse and Burro facility. With a net-metering system, Les said it doesn't matter where the collectors are relative to the buildings, just how close they are to the grid. Helen Mortenson noted the horse arena is quite exposed to high winds.

Peg Rees said the operator agreement will need to accommodate the shared use of solar energy between the two facilities. Michael said the BLM still needs to solve the net-metering issue. Frank said a commercial permit would be needed to generate the power needed, and the permits require a lot of lead time. Michael believes BLM can request an exception to the limits.

Les continued with his description of changes to the project. The Value Analysis suggested lowering the profile of the Administration Building. It now contains a screen wall with entry from the west. The Value Analysis also suggested removing a lot of natural stone and replacing it with concrete or split-face blocks in a warm grey color. Frank expressed concern about not using naturally occurring stone or straw bale. Peg noted that people think of concrete and split-face block as non-naturally occurring but it is a fine distinction, because they are made of natural products. Helen expressed dismay with the changes, which now don't appear to fit the look of the area and don't appear to reinforce green building technology. She wants the project to blend into the landscape and use materials from the area. Concrete buildings and a propane campfire are not what parents will expect.

Les explained the green systems are being built into the dormitories. He challenged anyone to find a school that is doing anything close to what this school will demonstrate and how it will relate to its environment. He agreed it was unfortunate to give up the stone but it represents about \$1.5 million in savings. Peg asked if a stone face could be added to the entry. Michael pointed out some stone will be retained in certain areas, and some cuts can be restored if the budget allows. Peg asked if on-site rock can be used elsewhere in the project. Les agreed that materials can probably be used for the entire friendship circle. Kathy August said the look of the place is a concern; it can be the greenest place around but if it looks unappealing the public will not embrace it.

Les noted that Line and Space had recently made a presentation about the project to the Green Building Council and was very well received. Henry Tom said the firm has looked at the LEED rating system, which is based on points. The architects believe the project can easily qualify for 48 points, with another 11 points uncertain and 15 points impossible. This would put the project in the Gold rating, just 2 points less than the Platinum rating. It becomes a budgetary decision whether to attempt to pick up the additional two points. Pat Fleming noted there are perhaps only 7 LEED Platinum buildings in the world. Mark Rekshynskyj said BLM will not devote budget merely for status reasons.

Les pointed out that having a shower for staff riding bicycles to work would gain an additional point, but this is not currently in the project. Peg asked if the shower in the nurse's area could be designated for this purpose. Les agreed to do that for one additional point, raising the overall projected point total to within 1 of the Platinum rating.

Peg asked if the architects were having estimators use the local market. The university recently discovered on one of its projects that costs have risen 10% in just the past 2 months, which has had a devastating budgetary impact. Predictions are that costs will continue to rise at this pace throughout the RRDLC timeline. Les stated they were using a local estimator.

Henry Tom said the firm is currently reviewing the Value Analysis for the Wild Horse and Burro facility. They have made some offices smaller, reduced the size of outdoor patios, and combined some restrooms. They are working with a national consultant to refine the design.

Henry reviewed an updated architectural schedule. The design development phase began in March and will continue through December 2005. The contract documents phase is projected to

begin in January 2006, with the project out to bid by October 2006, and construction beginning in February 2007. The planned opening date is March 2009.

B. *BLM Capital Improvements*

Michael Reiland deferred this report to the next meeting

8. Committee Reports

A. *Building Committee*

On behalf of Chair Angie Lara, Michael Reiland reported that the committee met on March 15. Minutes were distributed to the Core Group in the Line and Space packet (*on file in UNLV Public Lands Institute and BLM office*).

B. *Design Oversight Committee*

Chair David Frommer reported that the DOC committee has not met. Michael will talk to David about shifting what this committee does.

C. *Educational Programs Committee*

On behalf of Chair Paul Buck, Michael Reiland reported the committee met on April 8 to get committee's views on the products developed by Jeanne Klockow. The committee endorsed the work done thus far.

D. *Fund-Raising and Partnerships Committee*

Chair Blaine Benedict reported that the committee met on May 3, 2005 and distributed notes from the meeting (*on file in UNLV Public Lands Institute and BLM office*). The committee discussed overall concerns about the project and their effect on fund-raising. Blaine asked Michael to give an update on finding an operator. Michael reported that BLM is still putting together the statement of work. They now plan to issue a Request for Information (RFI) from potential bidders prior to issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP). It is still anticipated that the RFP process will provide a 90-day response time. Once bids are received, a 30-day review process will take place, using evaluators from BLM, the Core Group, and people from other science schools. BLM has determined that a concessionaire's agreement is the best vehicle for an agreement with an operator. Dale Etheridge urged a process that will encourage non-profits to bid. Many 501(c)3 groups can't work with a for-profit entity, which will limit their ability to volunteer time and expertise at the facility.

E. *NEPA Committee*

Chair Michael Johnson apologized for not having convened a committee meeting but reported on the status of the environmental analysis. John McCarty of Otak will be in Las Vegas the week of May 23 to provide BLM with a general update. Michael hopes to have a draft document for the next Core Group meeting along with a NEPA deadline.

F. *Operations Committee*

Chair Jackson Ramsey reported that the committee met on May 12. The Operations Committee formally requested that BLM issue the Request for Information no later than June 15.

G. *Other Uses Committee*

Chair Pat Williams reported that the committee has not met.

H. *Wild Horse and Burro Committee*

Chair Billie Young reported that the committee met on May 11. They discussed the curriculum and facility design. Northern Nevada is also building a wild horse and burro facility and the

committee will discuss coordination between the two facilities. There is also a continuing need to coordinate the Wild Horse and Burro facility with the science school and the visitor center. The committee is focusing on displays at the facility and the messages they want. They have also discussed other uses for the facility. Billie encouraged anyone from the Core Group to attend committee meetings.

Peg Rees asked if there had been any discussion of the sale of housing tracts at Bonnie Springs and the rodeo facility there. Michael Reiland said there is a potential impact on the NEPA but thought the focus is on what exists, not what is perhaps planned but undefined. Helen Mortenson suggested there will be a NEPA impact if homes are built before BLM breaks ground on the RRDLC.

9        Future Meeting Schedule

The next meeting of the Core Group was set for Tuesday, July 19, 10:30 a.m. at the BLM Interagency Building.

10.     New Business

Richard Leifreid said the Master Gardeners will be hosting the international Master Gardeners conference in Las Vegas March 2009. He hopes the RRDLC facility will be ready in time to accommodate a tour as part of the conference agenda.

Mark Rekshynskyj reiterated that the Core Group should forward any concerns to him or Michael Reiland.

The meeting adjourned at 1:08 p.m.